

Japan

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THE FAMINE  
IN  
NORTH JAPAN

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## AN APPEAL IN BEHALF OF THE FAMINE IN JAPAN.

Three of the northern provinces of Japan—Miyagi, Fukushima, and Iwate—with a population of 2,821,557, are confronting the worst famine since that deadly one of the Teimo Age, some sixty years ago. So great is the calamity in Miyagi especially that one of the papers says: “The sentence of death has been passed on the people of this province.” If we qualify this sentence by the words, one third of the people, it is literally true. In the population of 899,279, at least 280,000 are in extreme distress, with no possibility of saving life without aid.

The official statements of the situation reveal in part the intense suffering that hundreds of thousands must endure not only through the winter, but even more so through the entire spring and until new crops are harvested. The main facts only need to be stated to show the necessity of speedy aid.

Miyagi Province is by far in the worst condition. \$8,400,000 worth of rice is the average crop, but the yield this year is only 12 per cent. and a loss in rice alone of over \$7,000,000.

This is the sentence of death that hangs over a quarter of a million people in this province.

Fukushima Province has a population of 1,175,024. The average rice crop is worth \$9,276,950. This year's crop is less than one-quarter, and is worth only \$2,309,871, a loss in rice alone of about \$7,000,000. But this loss falls mainly on the eastern section of the province, where the crop is only 15 per cent. of the average. The extent of the calamity can be imagined when the carefully collected statistics show that some 300,000 people are already in distress and on the edge of absolute poverty.

Iwate is the most fortunate of these three provinces, the yield being  $\frac{1}{3}$  the average. But here too the southern section is in a wretched condition, since the rice crop is only  $\frac{1}{5}$  of the usual yield. Iwate's average crop is worth \$3,428,885, but this year it is valued at only \$1,157,010, a loss of \$2,271,875, among a population of 748,254. More than one hundred thousand people are thrown into starving conditions and cannot live without speedy and prolonged aid.

Already many in these three provinces are reduced to shrub roots and the bark of trees by which mere life may for a time be sustained,

but at the least calculation 680,000 people are now facing extreme conditions. What this means for their poor women and children we who live in the centre of this on-coming misery find no words to describe.

Many of the readers of this appeal will recall the famine of Aomori three years ago, and the generous and instant aid rendered by foreigners, especially in Tokyo, Yokohama and Shanghai. The loss of only half a crop brought on that calamity, and contributions amounting to 23,280 *yen* from foreigners showed their profound sympathy with the sufferers. But a calamity many times as great has fallen upon these three provinces, and what increases the distress is the fact that this famine comes at the end of a war that has cost the people unprecedented sacrifices.

Let it be borne in mind that this appeal does not emanate from the Japanese, but from foreigners who live in these provinces and are in sympathetic touch with the people and the authorities. High-spirited as these people are, they yet prize what men everywhere value most highly—substantial sympathy in time of trial and disaster. In the name of our common humanity we appeal in behalf of these famine-stricken people for quick and generous aid.

Contributions will be received by the Hong-kong and Shanghai Bank, Yokohama or by any of the branches of this bank throughout the world, or may be sent direct to our treasurer, Rev. Charles S. Davison, 187 Higashi Sambancho, Sendai, Japan. All funds will be administered in full consultation with the authorities of the three provinces.

Committee chosen by the foreign community of Sendai:

Sendai—

WILLIAM E. LAMPE, Chairman.  
C. S. DAVISON, Sec. and Treasurer.  
C. JACQUET.  
J. H. DEFOREST.  
M. B. MADDEN.  
G. A. FORREST.

Morioka—

WILLIAM AXLING.

# THE THREE PROVINCES.

## I. MIYAGI PROVINCE.

Early in the fall while many people were glibly saying: "O, there will be a fair crop," the chief paper of Sendai said in a startling editorial: "Let no one be deceived. The loss will be appalling." The last official statement of the rice crop gives less than 15 per cent. of the average, and the consequent loss on this one crop is \$7,000,000. The silk crop is the next in value, and on this there is a loss of \$2,000,000, making a total loss of \$9,000,000 in a population of 899,270. This means hard times for even those who are in the best of financial conditions, but for one-third of the population it means a "sentence of death."

One of the great rice plains of Northern Japan is on the coast of Miyagi Province. Here is one of the splendid granaries of the nation. It is a joy to see it in ordinary harvest times. It is a sickening sight to look over it now and contemplate the misery that must follow this failure of the crops.

Every one of the 16 counties, even the best, needs aid on a large scale, without which there

will be more loss of life in this one province than fell to the army during the late war. Nay, take the total of killed and wounded on all the battle fields of Manchuria, and this famine will slay more than that total, unless assistance is rendered.

Here is what the Chief of Miyagi County says: "This county has a population of 72,819. The average crop of rice is 1,533,545 bushels. This year it is only 38,415. At the price that foreign rice sells, 14 *yen* a *koku*, which is much cheaper than Japanese rice, the loss is \$693,182. This county averages to export 5,974 *koku* of rice, but its entire crop this year is only 7,683. Simply to save the lives of the people 122,060 bushels of rice must be imported, and this must be most economically used by mixing *nara* nuts, *warabi* roots, and the powder made by grinding rice straw. The actual number of men, women and children in extreme conditions is 18,155. Hundreds are already forced to eat this ill-looking and unsavory food." One of these combination cakes would gag the average foreigner if put into his mouth.

To get a little nearer the homes of these sufferers, take the worst village in this county, Osawa, with a population of 3,384. The average rice crop is 22,320 bushels, but this year's is

only 230. The best village is Takajo with 5,009 people. Their average yield is 12,013 *koku*, but this year's harvest is 1,750.

Look at one more county, Natori, just south of Sendai. It is in a lamentable condition. The polite head of the county will give you every detail of the wretchedness that faces his people. "The population is 92,528. The average rice crop is 421,675 bushels, but this year's yield is only 6,055 bushels, or less than 1½ per cent. There is one small plot that yielded 3 per cent., and two others 2½ per cent. Such a failure of the main crop is a calamity of the first magnitude. Measured in money it is a loss of \$581,868. The secondary crop is silk, and the small comfort that comes from the sale of that is \$46,450."

Now look at one of the worst villages so far as the rice crop is concerned, Akiho, with its 3,565 people. While their average crop is 15,290 bushels this year's yield is only 70. By selling wood and charcoal and by having a few vegetables, this village is raised to the 8th rank among 15 grades of misery.

Everything considered, the most fortunate village in this county is Nakada with an average crop of 22,905 bushels, but harvesting this year only 185. If you ask where is their good fortune, it consists in having cultivated a few

more vegetables than the other villages did.

These extreme cases are enough to show the unprecedented loss that has come upon every county in the province. In spite of an issue of provincial bonds and of borrowed money and exceptional public works for the employment of the poor, and of generous gifts on the part of Japanese all through the Empire, there will be a very wide margin of suffering to which all funds contributed by foreigners will be applied.

## 2. FUKUSHIMA PROVINCE.

This province comprises one city and seventeen counties. Roughly speaking, the province is divided into three main sections with natural boundaries; Aizu, embracing the city of Wakamatsu and five counties. Nakadori, or the nine counties lying along the line of the Nippon R. R., and Kaigan Dori, or the three counties along the sea-coast.

The population of Fukushima Province is a little over 1,000,000; the extent of land under cultivation for rice is a trifle more than 500 square miles. The average crop is 6,626,200 bushels, worth \$9,276,680. The crop this year is only 1,649,690 bushels, worth \$2,309,881 —a loss in rice of 4,976,285 bushels, and in money

of \$6,966,796. This represents an average crop of 25 per cent. for the entire province.

A quarter-crop is bad enough, but that it is even that large is due to the fact that the crop in the Aizu region is comparatively good, about 53 per cent. But if we leave out the five counties in this section, the average crop for the rest of Fukushima Province is only 15 per cent. of the yield for an ordinary year. Not only so, but in many places the net result of months of toil in the muddy fields is only 6 per cent. of what the farmers reasonably looked for.

To gain some idea of how this is affecting the people, it will be helpful to notice the fact that 65 per cent. of the rice acreage has produced practically nothing; of this 65 per cent. 43 per cent. is in the hands of the very poor, and the central government has suspended the current taxes. According to a careful estimate made by the heads of the various counties and their sub-officials, there are three hundred thousand souls within the province that must receive help in order to live through the coming winter. This does not include those who will suffer comparative loss, but only those who are reduced to extremes. Already thousands are living on fern-roots and the bark of trees mixed

with other coarse food. What the suffering will be until the new crops are harvested unless speedy aid is forthcoming, it is easy, though not comforting, to imagine.

At a special meeting of the provincial assembly the following measures of relief were formally adopted.

First of all, looking to the future, the province has bought \$136,000 worth of rice for next year's seed. This is to be distributed gratis to the suffering people, at the rate of about a bushel to an acre, but this will suffice for only the very poorest among those in want.

Besides this, about 30,000 acres of rice-field will be made over at an expense of \$69,000; mulberry trees to the value of \$25,000 will be given away to provide a means of support when the next silk season comes around.

\$13,000 will be spent in repairing the public highways, and in addition to this, \$250,000 will be expended in various kinds of public works in order to provide employment for the vast numbers of people who must perforce look for a livelihood. Half of this amount will be raised by the province, and the other half by the towns and villages.

This means that the province will have to bond itself for at least \$230,000 not counting the

\$136,000 for seed-rice which will be provided out of present assets. This much for the authorities: in many places local committees of relief have been organized, and the work of caring for the destitute will be taken up in systematic form. But with all that they can possibly do, there will be a wide margin of desperate need which calls for prompt action on the part of those who are moved by humanitarian impulses.

What makes this famine doubly hard to bear is the fact that the silk crop this year was only half the average, thus bringing additional burdens upon the people.

As a result of the grain famine there is likely to be an educational famine, in fact it is already here; in many places the number of teachers has been reduced by one half, in others the schools have been closed. The number of pupils is diminishing daily, partly because the children have nothing to take for their lunches and partly because they must stop studying to help the rest of the family find something to eat.

These facts were learned in the course of interviews with Vice-Governor Kikuchi, and the heads of various departments of administration. The provincial government is thro-

oughly organized for gathering statistics and applying aid. It is no wonder that the army and navy of this country work with the smoothness of an engine, for they are even more highly developed.

Vice-Governor Kikuchi said, " May, June and July is the time above all others when we shall be most anxious. At present we can provide work to keep the people from actual starvation, for there is imported rice to be had if only the people have money to buy it with, but next spring when they must plant the new rice crop and tend to the silk worms and mulberry trees, they will have no time to do the work that for the present may supply their daily food. Then is the time when we must appeal most strongly, and depend on outside benevolence."

Surely here is a condition of things that calls forth our deepest sympathy, and demands that we do our utmost for the sake of starving humanity. Let us remember the thousands of poor people who are now living on the most meagre kind of rations, and do not know for sure where to-morrow's food is to come from.

### 3. IWATE PROVINCE.

Iwate Province is facing a serious famine. The rice crop that in an average year yields to the province a resource of \$3,428,885 has this year only yielded a return of \$1,157,010. Here is a loss in money of \$2,271,875. The rice cultivation in the province covers an area of 51,539 cho (one cho 2.45 acres). Of this acreage, the greater part lies in the southern part of the province where the yield has been the poorest. What adds to the distress is that, here where the yield has been the poorest, only  $\frac{1}{5}$  of a crop, lives the far greater portion of the 748,254 population of the province; in fact here where probably 90 per cent. of the people live there is but a little over 20 per cent. of a crop, while the average for the whole province is but a fraction over 33 per cent.

For a more concrete illustration of the distress that is facing this province let us consider the conditions that exist in one district. Take for instance Nishi Iwai county, which has a population of 50,357. Its average rice crop is 276,090 bushels, but last year its crop was only 62,120 bushels. It is estimated that in this district alone at least 5,650 people will be

brought to extreme distress. The only way they will be able to live at all will be through Government and other aid. In addition to these, large numbers will doubtless have to be helped before spring. To simply maintain the lives of sufferers that are already in sight in this district alone counting at the meagre ratio of 5 *sen* per day for each person, \$28,752 will be needed, while the actual amount needed will be much more.

The provincial authorities are very loath to make any estimate as to the number of people in the province that will have to be helped if they are to be able to live through the severe winter of this cold North. Yet they do not hesitate to say, that it is already evident that 112,600 people are going to be brought to untold suffering. Early in the fall, when it was evident that the rice crop was going to be a failure, the authorities removed all restrictions relative to entering the Government forest reserves and for weeks thousands of people have been hunting the forests for *warabi* roots and eatable barks of trees. As yet not many are reduced to this as their only diet, but it is necessary to get them picked before the heavy December snows cover them up. Yet as the winter comes on this will be the only food that

multitudes will have, except as it is furnished by the Government and the gifts of Japanese and foreign givers.

The provincial authorities are fully awake to the distress that is staring the people in the face. For measures of relief they propose to spend \$50,876 on public works. They will also spend quite a sum in rearranging rice fields, and they expect to assist the various counties and villages to borrow from Tokyo banks the sum of \$150,000 to be used for the same purpose. However not all of the last two sums can be used to give work to the sufferers, because here some skilled labour will have to be employed. In order to provide seed for next year's planting \$52,500 will be used. As the children are quitting school because they have no lunches to bring, the authorities have bought 20,000 pounds of army biscuit to distribute among the school children. It is proposed to give each of them three of these biscuits for their mid-day meal. In this way it is hoped the schools can be kept going.

Here then is the situation. Twelve out of the thirteen counties of the province are in the area where the rice crop has wholly or partially failed. Already it is evident that about one out of every seven of the population will have

to be helped if they shall not starve to death. More detailed information will be available later on. Surely here is a cry from suffering humanity to which we cannot turn a deaf ear. When the Governor was asked just how much money he thought would be needed to relieve the coming distress, he replied, "Really the people of this province are so poor and have to live so close anyhow, that the loss of any of the shortage of \$2,771,875 will mean suffering." From this we can judge the need and the magnitude of it. From this statement we can also see the need of liberal giving on the part of foreigners.

## GENERAL.

The rice crop of Japan this year is 17 per cent. below that of the average year and only three-fourths of last year's crop, which was, however, a phenomenal yield. This shortage of 17 per cent. means a loss of \$42,000,000 to the farmers, but if this loss were distributed evenly throughout the length and breadth of the land, few foreigners would know of it except those who are interested in statistical tables. Much more than one-third of this loss is in the three provinces, Miyagi, Fukushima and Iwate.

Miyagi Province, the worst of all, because of the failure of the rice and other crops, has suffered to the extent of nine million dollars, about ten dollars to every man, woman and child, or more than fifty dollars for every family in the province. Rich people, merchants in the towns and certain others, will not feel this directly. The middle class of farmers, who rely on the rice harvest for the support of their families, must sell or mortgage their land. The lower middle class, who farm rented land, have no crop and no land to sell. Officials say that

this will be one of the hardest classes to help; for these people, accustomed to work in the fields, only ordinary coolie labour can now be found. Many of them, however, have clothing or some articles of household furniture; these must be sold to eke out a living until next summer.

What might be called the lower class is especially large in the north. Financially this is the poorest part of Japan. The soldiers of the Second Division who come from this region especially distinguished themselves in the late war, but whatever may be said of the bravery, sturdiness and honesty of these people, not many of them are rich in this world's goods. This year when food-stuffs must be brought in from the outside, when they have no money to buy after the food is brought in, and when the farmers have no work for even themselves, the poorest people must receive help from somewhere. In Miyagi Province more than one-third of all the people, and in the three provinces some 700,000 out of a population of 3,000,000 are already on the official lists as destitute (*kyūmin*) and unless looked after by village, town and city offices many of them will soon die of hunger.

As much land was tilled as in other years, the people worked hard, but there was too

much rain and too little sunshine and when the crop was harvested it was found that the heads which looked almost the same as in other years contained only juice which shrivelled up and did not become grains of rice. This is one reason why it was not known until quite recently that there is a famine in the north.

The policy of the officials is to give no help except where absolutely needed. The tax offices are of course open as always and, as is right, all who can must pay. Many will suffer inconvenience and many will know by experience what are the pangs of hunger, but somehow or other more than 2,000,000 of the people will be able to get along. But what is to become of the 700,000 *kyūmin*? That is as large an army as fought on both sides in any battle of the late war.

The standard of living is already low and the sacrifices made because of the war have made this still lower, but there is an irreducible minimum: the people must have something to eat. No one is to be allowed to actually starve to death. In order that there may be no epidemic among the poor their food is being carefully examined by official physicians. The straw cakes, acorns and other unpleasant food are not especially injurious—they satisfy the

cravings of hunger and will keep life in the body. A very small quantity of food will suffice to keep a person alive but life cannot be sustained for many months on the diet of these poor people. And besides the supply of acorns and other nuts will be exhausted by February.

The Government, national and local, is doing all in its power to provide relief work but as yet there are no plans to care for the sick and the aged. In time of famine in India after the Government has done all it could there is still occasion for private charity. So here in North Japan there is much room for generous giving to help the people in this their time of great need.



